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Partnering with Sub Contractors

General talking points:

- Partnering is a formal program designed to improve communications and teamwork among the people and organizations working on a construction project.
- Partnering is a discipline that filters throughout the project and serves as a constant reminder that what we are doing TOGETHER is important work and working TOGETHER is key to getting important work done.
- Partnering is critical regardless of the size of the project—good communication and teamwork is what brings a project out of the ground on time, on budget and safely. It also goes far in making sure the owner/users are having a good experience throughout the project.
- The primary reason for failed projects is poor communication and a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities.
- Partnering sessions are ideal to have at the beginning of a project, mid way through and at completion of certain project phases and at project completion.
- Project leaders must effectively manage a complex flow of information and communication among project team members and across all sub contractor companies. That flow of information has to be effectively disseminated throughout the project community—and that project community, depending on the size of the project, can be hundreds upon hundreds of people.

Increasing the likelihood of project success when using multiple sub contractors:

1. Make teamwork and communication a clear value from project kick off (pre-construction session) to project completion (remember to celebrate the wins along the way). In fact, I recommend that every project should be bound by a clear mandate that says, “We will never, ever compromise team work and communication.”
2. Create a project charter that clearly articulates the project values, project goals and objectives. Be sure to share the charter with all on the project.
3. Identify and commit to an easy-to-understand communication protocol. This will go far in mitigating the likelihood of mixed messages, frustration among team members and, most importantly, will pave the way for efficient decision making at the appropriate levels.
4. Identify and commit to a clear conflict resolution process. Don’t let conflicts linger, they will only undermine effective team work.

5. Clearly communicate and then respect the roles each subcontractor plays. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly articulated in a way that minimizes the possibility of confusion on the job site.
6. Communication, cooperation and collaboration are three primary values every project should observe. It's also important that project leadership finds ways to appropriately reward performance—celebrate the wins along the way. Find ways to reinforce and promote the kinds of behaviors you want on your project. This will go far in unifying all the subcontractors as one team.
7. Many issues that arise on a project are predictable. Our experience tells us this. Anticipating and proactively addressing issues before they become problems are important. People don't want to make mistakes on jobs. They want to do a good job. Project leadership needs to stay ahead of the issues so that everyone can keep moving and do good work.
8. Find ways to align the thinking of each subcontractor. This requires a disciplined approach to staying connected to the leaders from each company. Keep in mind that if you have 10 Subs on a job, that means that there are 10 different cultures, 10 different ways of communicating, 10 different ways of doing things, 10 different interpretations of accountability, etc. A successful project requires that there is one way of doing things—our way. The team's way—they way we agreed to at the beginning of the project.